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Institutional Discrimination of Women and Workplace Harassment of Female Expatriates: Evidence from 25 Host Countries

Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates workplace gender harassment of female expatriates across 25 host countries and considers the role of institutional level gender discrimination as a boundary condition. Further, the study investigates the effects of workplace gender harassment on frustration and job satisfaction and general job stress as a moderator.

Design/methodology/approach – The sample is comprised of 160 expatriates residing in 25 host countries. We test our model using partial least squares structural equation modeling.

Findings – The results show that female expatriates experience more workplace gender harassment than male expatriates. This effect is particularly pronounced in host countries with strong institutional level gender discrimination. Moreover, we found significant main effects of gender harassment on expatriates' frustration and job satisfaction. Further, we identified a significant association between frustration and job satisfaction. No significant moderation effect of general job stress was found.

Research limitations/implications – The study's data is cross-sectional. Future studies are encouraged to use longitudinal research designs. Further, future studies could center on perpetrators of harassment, different manifestations of harassment, and effective countermeasures.

Practical implications – The study raises awareness on the challenges of harassment of female expatriates and the role of the host country context. Further, our study shows the detrimental effects of gender harassment on female expatriates' job satisfaction which is a central predictor of variables crucial to international assignments, e.g., performance or assignment completion.

Originality/value – The study is among the first endeavors to include institutional level gender discrimination as a boundary condition of workplace gender harassment of female expatriates and therefore puts the interplay between macro- and micro-level processes into perspective.

Keywords Expatriation; female expatriates; discrimination; workplace gender harassment; job satisfaction; PLS-SEM

Paper Type Research paper

Introduction

Even though having experienced a marginal increase in the past decades, the number of female expatriates remains disproportionately low (Hutchings and Michailova, 2017). Hence, female expatriates are estimated to only make up approximately one fifth of the entire expatriate population (Brookfield, 2016). A major reason for the hesitation amongst organizations from Western industrialized countries to assign females is the apprehension of female expatriates facing prejudice and negative stereotypes in host countries leading to their discrimination and decreased performance (Shortland, 2009; van der Boon, 2003). This particularly relates to assignments in regions of the world such as Asia, the Middle East, or Africa, where the discrimination of females ranges from marginalization on the job market, e.g. China, to sexism in the workplace, e.g. India, and even driving bans in Saudi Arabia (e.g., OECD Development Centre, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2013).

However, prior research has yielded conflicting results on the prevalence of discrimination of female expatriates and whilst some studies indicated that females suffer from disadvantages (e.g., Napier and Taylor, 2002; Stalker and Mavin, 2011; Traavik and Richardsen, 2010), others (e.g., Adler, 1984, 1987; Varma, Toh and Budhwar, 2006) found no indication or even certain advantages associated with being a female expatriate, such as being looked upon as highly effective. In terms of generalizability, a caveat of the majority of these studies are small samples sizes ($N < 100$), the use of single-country data, or their qualitative nature. To resolve some of these inconsistencies and to provide more generalizable findings, the present study investigates the interplay between institutional level gender discrimination and female expatriates' experiences of workplace gender harassment across 25 host countries. Furthermore, we examine the effects of workplace gender harassment on job satisfaction – a pivotal predictor of crucial work-related outcomes, such as performance, or withdrawal intentions (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Shaffer, Harrison and Luk, 2005).

In this study we draw from the tenets of Status Construction Theory (SCT) (Ridgeway, 1991). SCT posits that nominal characteristics of individuals, such as gender, can become associated with status value in societies. This can result in the dissemination of problematic consensual beliefs implying that individuals with a certain characteristic are superior to others (e.g. men vs. females). We apply SCT in the international business (IB) context and use the framework to explain how discrimination of females on the institutional level conditions the emergence of workplace gender harassment, i.e. disrespectful, hostile verbal and physical behaviors conveying sexist attitudes (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand and Magley, 1997; Raver and Nishii, 2010), of female expatriates. We use the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (OECD Development Centre, 2014) as a proxy for the degree of gender discrimination on the institutional level. The index is an internationally accepted tool and captures inter alia discrimination of females with regard to violence against women, informal and formal laws limiting social participation, and restricted access to resources such as education. Additionally, as part of our conceptual model, we enhance our understanding of the underlying mechanism by which workplace gender harassment compromises female expatriates' job satisfaction and investigate the role of harassment-induced frustration and general job stress.

Against this background, the present study has the following contributions. First in contrast to prior studies (e.g., Adler, 1987; Harrison and Michailova, 2012; Mayrhofer and Scullion, 2002), our study includes expatriates in several regions of the world, e.g. Africa, the Middle East, or South (East) Asia, encompassing host countries such as Cambodia, India, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Building on the SIGI, we carefully selected host countries with differing degrees, i.e. low, medium, and high, of gender discrimination to explore the role of the institutional context as a boundary condition affecting the display of gender harassment. We thereby extend the nascent literature by adding a macro-micro perspective and address some of the shortages of prior research (e.g., Insch, McIntyre and Napier, 2008) by providing greater

generalizability and robustness to our findings. Likewise, we are among the first (Napier and Taylor, 2002) to examine gender harassment of female expatriates. Harassment differs from discrimination, which mirrors the persistence of structural inequalities, e.g. unfair career opportunities, or pay disparities (e.g., Schneider, Hitlan and Radhakrishnan, 2000), by its focus on micro-aggressions such as bullying, or sexist remarks (e.g., Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1988). Second, we investigate the effects of harassment in the workplace on a variable central to the success of international assignments – job satisfaction (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr and Christiansen, 2003; Takeuchi, 2010). In a similar vein, we contribute to the understanding of mechanisms and boundary conditions by which harassment affects job satisfaction. Third, our study offers implications for the inference of adequate preparation measures in the pre-assignment stage and the extrapolation of countermeasures that may help female expatriates in dealing with the challenges posed by discrimination and harassment in the host country workplace (e.g., Forstenlechner, 2010; Stoermer, Haslberger, Froese, and Kraeh, 2017). This is likely to be relevant for the successful completion of assignments and for avoiding high costs caused by premature returns.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

There is a large body of research on antecedents (e.g., Avery, McKay and Wilson, 2008; Metcalfe, 2006) and consequences (e.g., Lim and Cortina, 2005; Shaffer and Harrison, 1998), of workplace gender discrimination and harassment in the domestic context. In comparison to the literature in the domestic context, gender discrimination and harassment have drawn little attention in the IB literature and, in particular, in expatriate management research. In fact, in their literature review Altman and Shortland (2008) found that discrimination against and harassment of female expatriates was tapped upon mainly as a side aspect of some studies that examined women and their general experiences in IB.

With regard to the extant research on discrimination and harassment of female expatriates, our review of the literature produced an inconsistent picture. Thus, the seminal pioneering works of Nancy Adler (1984, 1987) provided indications that discrimination is less of a problem for female expatriates. Specifically, in her qualitative study of female expatriates in East Asia in the late 1980s, Adler found that being female was considered an advantage. For instance, female expatriates reported that they enjoyed the high visibility, easier access to clients, or being considered as highly capable performers. Other studies further offered evidence that female expatriates were not discriminated against. Varma *et al.* (2006) showed that female expatriates from the United States working in India did not suffer from discrimination and were even preferred by host country nationals (HCNs) as co-workers. Further, Janssens and colleagues (2006) found that female expatriates re-interpreted gender-related disadvantage and drew empowerment from their strengthened gender identity.

In contrast, a second strand of literature suggests that female expatriates experience gender-related problems and barriers abroad. For instance, Napier and Taylor (2002) compared experiences of female expatriates in China, Japan, and Turkey. They report that female respondents had difficulties to establish credibility abroad and were seen as *unusual* foreign workers, with some of them reporting explicit experiences of sexual harassment. Additionally, Hutchings and colleagues (2013) explored the experiences of Western female expatriates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Most interviewees working in multinational companies reported no gender-related disadvantages, however, when interacting with local, Arab men some interviewees indicated that their opinions were not taken seriously and that they had to adhere to local customs that would be deemed discriminatory according to Western standards, e.g. not being allowed to shake hands with men. Analyzing gender discrimination in home and host countries, Tzeng (2006) identified that the ethnic origin of female expatriates matters. Accordingly, West-

ern women in Taiwan reported that primarily female expatriates from countries culturally/ethnically close to Taiwan were exposed to discrimination at work in the same way local women were, indicating intra-ethnic gender discrimination.

In sum, the current body of studies appears to provide conflicting accounts of female expatriates' situation regarding experiences of discrimination and harassment. The present study thus intends to provide a more conclusive picture of the situation of female expatriates across a set of 25 host countries.

Status Construction Theory and macro-micro processes

Status Construction Theory (SCT) (Ridgeway, 1991) embraces both the macro- and the micro-level. It is basically the synthesis of the core assumptions originating from Blau's (1977) Structural Theory (Blau, 1977) and Berger's and associates' (1974) Expectation States Theory. SCT's basic premise is that status-based discrimination and marginalization of social groups are connected to the prevalence of sociocultural beliefs that assign greater social esteem, worthiness, and competence to individuals holding a certain nominal attribute (e.g. men vs. women, Caucasians vs. people of color). The association of social esteem and competence with a certain social group is rooted in the historically unequal distribution of and access to meaningful resources to social groups in a given society (Ridgeway, 1991). With time, these nominal characteristics can acquire an independent status value in societies (Ridgeway, 1991), which means that, for instance, a person of color will be thought of as being less privileged than a Caucasian individual and, in consequence, will be treated differently in daily interactions (most likely less favorably). In turn, the assigned status value and its influence on interactions will facilitate the reinforcement of degrading behaviors towards underprivileged social groups (Ridgeway, 2006), and further perpetuate status hierarchies on the macro-level. After having introduced the principles of SCT, we will develop our hypotheses in close connection to the theory next.

Hypotheses Development

Gender and workplace harassment

There is clear evidence in the domestic literature that women¹ tend to become more often target of workplace gender harassment than men (e.g., McDonald, 2012; O'Connell and Korabik, 2000; Piotrkowski, 1998). Referring to SCT (Ridgeway, 1991), the socio-structural causes lie in the unequal distribution of resources between males and females and the fallacious association with gender implying that females are inferior and less worthy than men. These macro-level beliefs will be enacted in individual level interactions which make women more vulnerable and an easier target for harassment. With respect to the expatriation context, we assume a similar mechanism and whilst some studies have found that women do not experience gender-related disadvantages during expatriation (Adler, 1987, Varma *et al.*, 2006), we conclude that if gender harassment occurs, females will most likely be the victims. This tendency has also been depicted in some empirical evidence from expatriation research (e.g., Napier and Taylor, 2002). Thus, we derive:

Hypothesis 1a: Female expatriates experience higher degrees of workplace gender harassment than male expatriates.

The moderating effects of institutional level gender discrimination

High institutional level discrimination against women denies or restricts females access to education, assets, resources, fair legal treatment, physical integrity, and overall inhibits women's social empowerment (OECD Development Centre, 2014). Frequently, institutional discrimination of women is strongly connected to the enactment of cultural practices, e.g. religious codes, such as the Sharia, determining women's decision-making power, subordination to men, and

¹ At this point, regardless of the focus of our study, we would like to emphasize that not only women suffer from discrimination and harassment. This also applies to other minorities, e.g. sexual and religious minorities, or individuals with disabilities. Further, the combination of stigmatized characteristics, i.e. intersectionality, can pose severe hurdles for concerned individuals (e.g., Berdahl and Moore, 2006).

the denial of the right to work (Metcalf, 2006). Similarly, women's right of property ownership is restricted in many countries and women are denied the acquisition of land in 102 countries (OECD Development Centre, 2014). Also, other civil liberties, e.g., freedom of movement, or political voice, are limited for women in many countries, e.g. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Malaysia, or Nigeria (Berger, 2011; Metcalf, 2008; OECD Development Centre, 2014). Further, in several countries of the world, e.g. Egypt, or Afghanistan, women suffer from restricted physical integrity limiting their control over their body and facilitating gender-based violence.

Following SCT (Ridgeway, 1991, 2006), we consider institutional level discrimination of women to be a macro-level manifestation of females' power position and status in a given society's stratification system. Consistent with SCT's principles, we assume that consensual beliefs of female's overall value and role in society will be re-enacted and reinforced in interactions on the micro-level (Ridgeway, 1991). In other words, gender discrimination on the institutional level will condition the nature of interactions between female expatriates and HCNs in the workplace. This should result in a higher display of workplace gender harassment directed at female expatriates and similarly, perpetrators might feel greater encouragement to engage in these behaviors in countries where it is acceptable to hold degrading attitudes towards women.

As stated in our above review of the literature, some research found no evidence that women were more vulnerable to become victim of gender-related disadvantages (see for a review: Hutchings and Michailova, 2017) and that local men tended to differentiate between local and foreign women (Tzeng, 2006). However drawing from SCT, we assume that the overall likelihood of becoming target of gender harassment increases for female expatriates with more pronounced institutional level gender discrimination. This is further substantiated by empirical evidence. For instance, Napier and Taylor (2002) found that female expatriates in Japan reported instances of sexual harassment at work. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1b: Institutional discrimination of females moderates the relationship between gender and workplace gender harassment in a way that female expatriates experience higher degrees of workplace gender harassment when the institutional discrimination of females in the host country is high.

The effects of gender harassment on job satisfaction and frustration

Literature on gender discrimination, harassment and respective consequences, e.g. low productivity, is rich in the domestic context (see for a meta-analysis: e.g., Willness, Steel and Lee, 2007). So is literature on expatriate job satisfaction (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005). Linking the two constructs appears logical, whenever individuals experience harassment on international assignments in their workplace, it is likely that they are less satisfied with their job.

Looking at the literature on workplace gender harassment in a domestic setting, Raver and Nishii (2010) report that high levels of gender harassment lead to lower commitment, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover intentions. Moreover, women who were aware of their disadvantages caused by gender showed lower self-esteem (Branscombe, 1998). Respondents also reported negative effects on their psychological well-being (Schmitt, Branscombe and Postmes, 2003). In general, there is clear evidence that gender harassment typically evokes negative emotional responses (Schmitt *et al.*, 2003). Since job satisfaction can be considered a positive emotional state (Locke, 1976), people who experience gender harassment at the workplace may emotionally respond with a decrease in job satisfaction. As stated above, these processes are empirically confirmed in the domestic context and we assume that this will not be different on international assignments.

Moreover, research in the domestic context, has found that individuals respond to inhibiting conditions at work with feelings of frustration (Peters, O'Connor and Rudolf, 1980). We assume that the experience of workplace gender harassment can be considered an "inhibiting condition" and individuals getting frustrated when being the target of harassment is under-

standable. In this regard, research from the diversity field found that conflict between individuals from socially advantaged (in this case, white males) and disadvantaged groups leads to frustration among individuals belonging to the less privileged group (Cox and Blake, 1991). In most instances, be it in the domestic or expatriation context, the majority of workplace gender harassment originates from males (McDonald, 2012). Consequently, underlying gender-based intergroup conflicts and being the target of harassing behaviors conveying that one is considered inferior should result in increased levels of frustration with female victims of harassment.

With regard to the effects of frustration on job satisfaction, we suggest that frustrated individuals will experience negative affective states leading to a reduction in job satisfaction. This is also supported by empirical findings in a domestic setting. For instance, Fox and Spector (1999) identified a highly significant negative relationship between frustration and job satisfaction and Spector and Jex (1991) showed that frustrated employees were not only less satisfied with their jobs but also held higher turnover intentions. In conclusion, based on the argumentation above and the delineated empirical findings, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a: Workplace gender harassment relates negatively to job satisfaction

Hypothesis 2b: Workplace gender harassment relates positively to frustration.

Hypothesis 2c: Frustration relates negatively to job satisfaction.

Stress as a moderator of the effects of frustration on job satisfaction

Expatriation per se can be considered a stressful endeavor (Harrison, Shaffer and Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004; Wang and Nayir, 2006). Stress occurs, when an individual appraises his or her relationship with the environment as significant for his or her well-being (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Consequently, depending on the specific situation and environment abroad, some expatriates perceive more, others less stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that stress is a rubric of many variables and processes and leads to different relevant outcomes. In general, while

certain stressors lead to stress, we need to distinguish between different kinds of stress. In our study, we focus on expatriates' general job stress. Research found that more important work leads to more general stress (Silbiger and Pines, 2014). This makes sense, as people tend to be more involved and engaged in their work.

However, in the long run, stress can be burdening. Research found that certain stressors can increase the negative impact of stress on e.g. behavior (Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Theorell and Karasek, 1996). Whenever a person is stressed, a variety of outcomes and other relationships in this person's life can become affected by stress (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling and Boudreau, 2000; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). For instance, Bader and Berg (2013) argue that stress induced by fear of terrorism leads to less favorable attitudes towards locals in the host country. On the contrary, support from within the organization would be beneficial to reduce stress and this lower level of stress in turn leads to positive outcomes, such as well-being (Bader and Schuster, 2015). We argue that the above-mentioned relationship between frustration and job satisfaction is influenced by general stress. The impact that frustration has on job satisfaction is supposed to be emphasized by the general stress level of the expatriate because he or she experiences higher pressure and therefore the negative impact is supposed to be even more detrimental. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Stress moderates the relationship between frustration and job satisfaction in a way that frustrated expatriates experience lower job satisfaction when they are more stressed.

Please insert Figure 1 about here

Our hypotheses are summarized in the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1.

Methods

Research design and sample

This study is based on data that were collected in 2016 and is part of a larger research project (Bader, Reade and Froese, 2017). Before contacting respondents, we conducted purposeful sampling and identified expatriates residing in countries with high (e.g. Bangladesh), medium (e.g. Kenya), and low (e.g. Thailand) levels of institutional level gender discrimination. We identified different levels of institutional gender discrimination relying on the SIGI (OECD Development Centre, 2014) and selected host countries with low, medium, and high institutional level gender discrimination. Since there is no publicly available data base listing contact information of expatriates, we looked for respondents residing in our selection of host countries via social networks, such as LinkedIn. Fitting profiles of expatriates were screened and Email addresses of 1450 potential respondents were collected. Eventually, we contacted these individuals via Email. The invitation contained a brief description of our research interest and an individualized link that took expatriates to our web-based online survey. After two weeks, we sent out reminders.

This procedure yielded 160 usable samples which equates to a response rate of 11%. Tests for non-response bias, comparing early and late responses (Armstrong and Overton, 1977) indicated no significant differences. Respondents were, on average, 43 years old (mean= 42.56; SD= 11.92) and had spent 39 months in their current host country (mean= 38.60; SD= 42.97) at the time of the survey. 72.5% of respondents were married or in a relationship and 41.3% were accompanied by their family. The majority of participants can be considered internationally experienced managers, with about five years of experience abroad in total. The characteristics of our sample are comparable to previous samples in expatriate research (e.g., Bader, Berg and Holtbrügge, 2015; Puck, Mohr and Rygl, 2008; Takeuchi, Yun and Tesluk, 2002). Since we intended to examine differences between male and female expatriates with regard to workplace gender harassment, we had to assure a sufficient number of female samples to be able to

test our hypotheses. We considered this in our sampling approach and purposefully searched for more (potential) female participants during Email address collection. The final sample is comprised of 36% female expatriates. In terms of home country, most respondents are from Germany (47.5%), the UK (11.9%), or the US (10.6%), while the remaining expatriates originated from 18 different, mostly European countries. An overview of the host countries represented in this study and their position on the SIGI is presented in Table 1.

Please insert Table 1 about here

Measures

In this study, we exclusively relied on established measures that have been successfully applied in previous studies. If not indicated otherwise, we used Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5. The respective scales are presented here.

Gender. Gender was asked directly and coded binary (male= 0, female= 1).

Institutional level gender discrimination. The degree of institutional level gender discrimination was obtained relying on external, objective data. In particular, we used the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (OECD Development Centre, 2014). The SIGI is a representative index capturing gender inequality in more than 100 countries. It aligns qualitative as well as quantitative data on discriminatory social institutions and their effects on women's poverty and empowerment. The index is comprised of five sub-dimensions, i.e. discriminatory family codes, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted access to resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties. Examples of countries scoring very high on the overall SIGI are Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia. Countries scoring low are inter alia Kazakhstan, or Israel. Based upon the SIGI, we assigned values from 1 (= very low discrimination) to 5 (= very high discrimination) to each host country represented in our data.

Workplace gender harassment. This construct consists of six items and was measured using the respective scale developed by Raver and Nishii (2010). Raver and Nishii's measure is a modified version of the ethnic harassment scale developed by Schneider *et al.* (2000). Sample items are "Someone at work uses sexist slurs to describe me" or "Someone at work makes derogatory comments about my gender."

Frustration. In order to capture expatriates' level of frustration, we applied the three-item frustration measure developed by Peters and colleagues (1980). A sample item is "Being frustrated comes with this job."

General stress. We measured general stress with four items taken from the Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983). Respondents were asked to indicate how often in the last month they felt not confident about their ability to handle the assignment. A sample item is "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?"

Job satisfaction. The dependent variable job satisfaction was measured using the three-item inventory from the widely applied Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh, 1983). Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the items. A sample item is "In general, I like working here."

Control variables. Following previous empirical research on expatriation (e.g., A.K. Bader, Reade and Froese, 2017; Puck, Kittler and Wright, 2008), we first included several demographic variables to identify whether they had an impact on our model. In particular, we ran calculations controlling for expatriates' age, relationship status, family accompaniment, and previous international assignment experience. However, none of these variables had a significant influence on our model and our main effects remained stable. Therefore, we excluded control variables from further analyses.

Ex-ante and ex-post measures to address common method variance

As this study is based on cross-sectional data, we followed recommendations by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) to address common method variance (CMV) by ex-ante means. We therefore placed items for predicting and outcome variables in separate questionnaire segments, informed respondents that there were no “wrong” or “right” answers, and that they should answer as honestly and spontaneously as possible. Ex-post, we applied the common latent factor (CLF) test to assess CMV in our data. In line with recent recommendations, the obtained value for the CLF lies below the threshold of .20 (Nurmi and Hinds, 2016). This indicates that CMV is not severely distorting our findings. In addition, two focal variables of our model, i.e. gender and institutional level gender discrimination, are of an objective nature and are thus unlikely to be distorted by CMV.

Results

To test our hypotheses, we applied partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using the SmartPLS 3.0 Software (Ringle, Wende and Becker, 2015). Concerning model fit, there is no acceptable general goodness-of-fit index for PLS-SEM (Henseler and Sarstedt, 2013). Instead, a two-stage approach, sequentially assessing the quality of the outer model, like confirmatory factor analysis, and the inner model, estimation of the regression paths, is common practice (Hair, Sarstedt and Pieper, 2012). Further, for conducting PLS-SEM, Barclay, Higgins and Thompson (1995) advise the use of the “ten-times rule”, which suggests to have at least ten times as many observations as structural paths. This criterion was met ($N = 160$, 7 structural paths). The maximum number of iterations was set to 300, all bootstrapping procedures followed conservative criteria, consulting 5,000 bootstrap samples and applying no sign changes (Hair *et al.*, 2012). In Table 2, the internal consistency of the measurement model is

depicted. Table 3 shows means, standard deviations, and correlations for both exogenous and endogenous variables.

Please insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

Assessment of the outer model

While all latent constructs in our model were measured by the use of multiple items, gender was included as a binary variable and institutional discrimination is a single-item measure based on the SIGI. The criteria proposed in the literature were met for the outer model: As suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), all reliability values (values between .898 and .925) exceeded the threshold of .70, assuring sufficient internal consistency. Each indicator loading was higher than .70 on its respective factor and statistically significant. The average variance extracted (AVE) values are higher than .50 for any factor (values between .631 and .805). Hence, convergent validity was confirmed as well (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). To confirm discriminant validity, we used the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of each construct's AVE to be higher than its correlation with any other factor (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The respective values are shown in Table 3. More recent research raises concerns that this check alone is not sufficient though. Thus, we performed an additional analysis checking that the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) does not exceed .90 (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). Our model meets these requirements with the highest value being .55. We also assessed the magnitude of discrepancies between observed and predicted correlations, i.e. the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Since values of .10 (or .08 in a more conservative interpretation) indicate a good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1998), the SRMR of .076 of our common factor model indicates that our model fits the data well. Finally, we checked variance inflation factor values (VIF values) to discover multicollinearity issues. The highest VIF value is 2.022

and thus, below the suggested cut-off of 5 (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2011). This indicates no severe multicollinearity problems.

Assessment of the inner model

We now turn to testing our hypotheses. We hypothesized in Hypothesis 1a that female expatriates experience more workplace gender harassment than male expatriates. Hypothesis 1a was confirmed ($\beta = .370$, $p < .001$). In Hypothesis 1b, we postulated that institutional level gender discrimination moderates the association between gender and workplace gender harassment. We found support for this hypothesis ($\beta = .180$, $p < .05$). Hence, female expatriates are most likely to become target of gender harassment if they work in a host country with pronounced discrimination of females on the institutional level (please see Figure 3).

Next, we tested Hypothesis 2a which posited a negative effect of workplace gender harassment on job satisfaction. Our analysis supports this assumption ($\beta = -.138$, $p < .05$). Moreover, data also corroborates Hypothesis 2b, postulating that gender harassment also leads to increased frustration ($\beta = .205$, $p < .05$). Consequently, frustration was argued in Hypothesis 2c to also negatively affect job satisfaction. This hypothesis was accepted ($\beta = -.285$, $p < .05$).

Finally, Hypothesis 3 argued that the relationship in Hypothesis 2c is moderated by expatriates' general on the job stress. Hence, we assumed that the negative effects of frustration on job satisfaction become amplified in expatriates who experience high levels of general job stress. This hypothesis was however not accepted ($\beta = .103$, $p > .05$).

Please insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

Discussion

Drawing on a sample of 160 expatriates living and working in 25 different host countries, the present study set out to examine the prevalence of gender harassment in the workplace during international assignments. The results from PLS-SEM indicate that female expatriates experience higher levels of workplace gender harassment. Further, workplace gender harassment is more likely to emerge in host countries with high levels of gender discrimination on the institutional level. We also identified a significant positive relationship between gender harassment and frustration. Likewise, frustration and gender harassment were both found to exert significant negative direct effects on job satisfaction. Finally, the effects of frustration on job satisfaction were not found to be moderated by general stress associated with the international assignment. Next, we discuss the results in the light of theory and derive implications for practice and future research.

Theoretical implications

This study is among the first research endeavors to examine the prevalence/ experiences of female expatriates with regards to gender harassment across several host countries. By doing so, we extend prior research that has examined the existence and outcomes of prejudice and stereotypes of HCN's towards female expatriates (e.g., Adler, 1984, 1987; Harrison and Michailova, 2012; Hutchings *et al.*, 2010; Varma *et al.*, 2006). In addition, we further advance the debate in the expatriation field by making an important conceptual distinction between the more structurally and policy-driven nature of the discrimination construct and the gender harassment variable which captures experiences of sexist remarks and behaviors at work (Berdahl and Moore, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1988). In conjunction with this, the detailed theoretical implications from our study can be summarized as follows.

First, drawing from SCT (Ridgeway, 1991), we posited that female expatriates would more likely be confronted with degrading attitudes facilitating the emergence of gender harassment. We found strong support for this assumption. This is in line with prior research in the domestic context (e.g., McDonald, 2012; O'Connell and Korabik, 2000; Piotrkowski, 1998) and corroborates some of the findings in the expatriation context, e.g. sexual harassment of female expatriates in Japan (Napier and Taylor, 2002). Yet and at first sight, this result is in conflict with the extant body of research (e.g., Adler, 1987; Varma *et al.*, 2006) which posited that women might even enjoy preferential treatment. We believe that the key in resolving some of these inconsistencies lies in a more nuanced interpretation of the present findings. Therefore, experiencing harassment in one particular context at work does not exclude being preferentially treated in another context. For instance, female expatriates might be the target of sexist remarks of one certain co-worker, whilst other colleagues or the supervisor might endow some privileges to the expatriate. This is in line with the presumption of Hutchings *et al.* (2013) suggesting that the experiences of female expatriates operate on a continuum. Similarly, we presume that our findings should be interpreted as the depiction of a tendency. Thus, indicating that if gender harassment during international assignments occurs, it is more likely that female expatriates are targeted than males.

Second, this study investigated gender harassment of female expatriates as a contextualized phenomenon and contributes to our understanding of country level boundary conditions (e.g., Harrison and Michailova, 2012; Napier and Taylor, 2002; Varma *et al.*, 2006). We identified that gender as a nominal status characteristic (e.g., Ridgeway, 1991) will particularly prime engagement in harassing behaviors in country contexts where women suffer from low physical integrity, subordination to men, and have few civil liberties. This is consistent with the principles of SCT (Ridgeway, 1991) which suggest that macro-level status assumptions will be enacted in interactions on the micro-level. Subsequently, we conclude that the transfer of these

socio-culturally accepted status assumptions to the individual level will result in a low hierarchical ordering of female expatriates and an increased propensity to display harassing behaviors towards them, such as using sexist slurs, or making sexist remarks (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1988; Raver and Nishii, 2010). This corresponds with prior domestic research which implied that individuals will be more likely to display harassing behaviors if they perceive that the social context tolerates or even encourages harassment of groups with low social status (e.g., Dekker and Barling, 1998). In this regard, countries such as India, Saudi Arabia, or China might be contexts where such dynamics could be particularly pronounced. For instance, in China, females are often expected to go out drinking with business clients or supervisors and to put up with flirting attempts and unwanted sexual advances. Likewise, females in India suffer from gender hierarchies and are often made responsible for instances of sexual harassment and receive little support from supervisors in penalizing perpetrators (International Labour Organization, 2013). Additionally, our study provides some tentative support for the assumption that HCNs might not differentiate between host country and foreign women. However, future comparative research is warranted looking at the role of ethnic (dis)similarity (Tzeng, 2006) and varying degrees and manifestations of gender harassment targeted at local women and female expatriates.

Third, prior research has paid extensive attention to predictors of job satisfaction with regards to international assignments (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Takeuchi, 2010). We add another variable to the known set of predictors and identified the strong, detrimental influence of gender harassment on job satisfaction. By doing so, we extend the scarce research that has examined the role of social exclusion and discrimination (e.g., Stoermer *et al.*, 2017) during international assignments on expatriates' work-related attitudes. In a similar vein, our study enhances our understanding of the underlying mechanism by which gender harassment leads to decreases in job satisfaction. Accordingly, we detected that

experiencing gender harassment induces frustration in expatriates which eventually adversely affects appraisal of the job and thus prevents individuals from deriving a positive emotional state from their work. Finally, we found no support for a moderating effect of stress in the relationship between frustration and job satisfaction. While there is clear evidence that frustrated individuals are less satisfied with their job, it seems that it hardly matters whether expatriates are stressed or not. Even though we looked at general stress – a variable that is clearly also related to the situation of being on an international assignment (e.g., Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991) – it does not necessarily influence expatriates' emotional responses to frustration and the subsequent effects thereof on job satisfaction.

Practical implications

Our research has several important implications. With regard to the impact of institutional discrimination, a natural reaction would be to advise against sending women on assignments in countries where institutional discrimination is high. However, we believe that this would be a fatal flaw and would actually reinforce discrimination. Instead, we actually encourage MNCs to assign female expatriates whenever they are best qualified for the job. However, when doing so, organizations should adopt a two-pronged approach comprising extensive cross-cultural training – for female expatriates as well as managers, and HCN co-workers. Also, with regard to the finding that women who are perceived as competent experience less discrimination (Taylor and Napier, 1996), companies should help their female expatriates to show and prove their competence for everyone to see. Likewise, cultural intelligence (Earley, 2002) has been shown to be helpful for expatriates to deal with difficult situations abroad. Against this background, companies might use the short cultural intelligence measure by Thomas *et al.* (2015) as a screening tool in the pre-assignment stage.

Pertaining to host country managers, a better communication of the company's values and beliefs as well as a broader education, especially in host countries with a very high level of institutional discrimination, may yield productive results. Such means may not only consist of trainings and seminars but could also cover field trips or inpatriation. Similarly, companies might strive to develop an inclusive organizational climate in which individuals learn to acknowledge the value in differences (Nishii, 2013). Thus, working in a climate for inclusion can create more opportunities to work together and to get to know one another – pivotal predictors of reducing fault lines between demographically dissimilar individuals (e.g., Dwertmann and Boehm, 2016). A good starting point and guidance might be found in the literature that focuses on the particularities of establishing an inclusion climate in different cultural contexts (e.g., Stoermer, A.K. Bader and Froese, 2016).

Eventually, we assume that the consideration of the prevalence of gender discrimination and harassment in host countries in a pre-assignment stage and the implementation of counter-measures might be crucial for avoiding premature assignment returns and to prevent high costs associated with failed expatriation.

Limitations and future research

The findings of the present study need to be interpreted in the light of its limitations. First, it is cross-sectional in nature and we cannot account for long-term effects of workplace gender harassment. Future research could survey expatriates at different time points during their international assignment. Second, the sample size is still relatively small and primarily comprised of Western expatriates, e.g. from Germany, and for some host countries, we only had few samples. To enhance the external validity of findings, we encourage future research to assure a more balanced and overall larger sample also comprising expatriates originating from regions such

as Asia or Africa. Moreover, our sample only covers expatriates who actually are on an assignment. We think that our findings could be extended by examining first-hand accounts of individuals who actually prematurely quit their assignment due to harassment experiences. This may also have an effect on the corporate Return on Investment (cROI) of an assignment (for a review, see Breitenmoser and Bader, 2016). In order to better understand the experiences and effects of harassment, we advocate and encourage researchers to engage in qualitative studies. Likewise, we encourage future research to center on additional social groups that might be prone to experience harassment during expatriation to certain regions of the world, e.g. homosexual men, or individuals from certain religious backgrounds. Also, our knowledge of perpetrators, organizational dynamics, i.e. the role organizational climate, leadership styles such as abusive leadership (Tepper, 2007), and the specific forms harassment could take in the expatriation context is limited. Again, future qualitative studies could make a key contribution in advancing the field. Additionally, we think it is worthwhile to examine personality variables that might help individuals in coping with incidents of gender harassment during expatriation, e.g. resilience. Future research might also draw from the works of Stoermer *et al.* (2017) who found that CQ helps expatriates in dealing with racioethnicity-based social exclusion in the workplace. Finally, it would be interesting to explore the role of accompanying family members on expatriates' perceptions and responses to gender-related and other forms of harassment. We assume that family could be one of the resources individuals draw upon to support them in dealing with harassment. However, it is also possible that crossover effects of the spouse or children experiencing harassment and discrimination themselves influence expatriates' own perceptions and emotional responses to instances of harassment at work.

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